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Residents remember together

By: ANDREA DECKERT, Times Staff Writer

September 12, 2002



Clifton Springs residents marched from Village Hall to the firehouse on Kendall Street, where a ceremony was held last evening to commemorate the first anniversary of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. Photo by Spencer Tullis

GENEVA - Like other communities across the state and world, the city yesterday paid tribute to the heroes and victims of last Sept. 11, first with a morning ceremony and then one at noon.

"Rather than dividing our country, the attacks united our country," said Sen. Michael F. Nozzolio, R-53 of Fayette, to a crowd that paid little attention to a strong wind during a noon remembrance ceremony in front of the Long Pier.

"My world, your world changed on Sept. 11, 2001," he said. "Americans showed they will never be defeated."

Nozzolio commended the emergency personnel who rose to the challenge last year, noting that they have become the ones the younger generation can look to as role models.

In the morning ceremony in front of the city's Hydrant Hose Company firehall on Geneva Street, the Rev. W. James Gerling, pastor at The Presbyterian Church in Geneva, spoke of the hardships on emergency workers.

"We are fed up with the reality that people like yourselves, who have chosen this honorable calling and wear these proud uniforms, are called upon far too often to be heroes and act with selfless courage in the face of tragedies that shouldn't be happening in the first place," said Gerling.

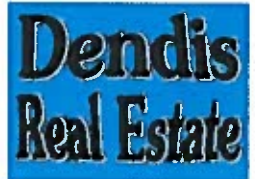
"I don't want to see images of your comrades on the front of Time or Newsweek carrying dead children.

"I'd rather be standing here having a memorial service for your comrades who died in their beds from old age, or saluting as you march by in a parade. But that's not the kind of world we live in."

Gerling, who followed his remarks with a prayer, said people need to work toward peace.

"We have to work even harder at teaching our children not to hate, and to understand and

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respect their neighbors in this global community in which we live," he said. "We have to help our kids understand that extremists and terror-mongers are a minute minority in the world-wide community and that they are sowing the insidious seeds of their own destruction. Because, ultimately, this is a just world in which we live, a world that longs for peace."

The morning ceremony also included members of the city's Fire Department placing a memorial wreath in front of the Bell Monument, as well as commemorating the times of the planes' impact in New York City, Shanksville, Pa., and Washington, D.C., by sounding the fire horn.

Assistant Fire Chief James McCormack led the firefighters and audience members in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

McCormack, a state trooper who went to Ground Zero shortly after the attacks, called them a "tremendous, tremendous tragedy for our nation."

The noon service started with the city's fire horn sounding 5-5-5 in tribute to a firefighter who died in the line of duty.

Color guards from the American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars posts and Geneva Fire Department posted the colors at the beginning of the ceremony and gave a rifle squad volley at the end.

Mayor Donald Cass proclaimed the day one of remembrance for those who died last Sept. 11 and read a poem about unity and the American spirit. Remarks also were made by retired Col. Dominick Passalacqua; retired Brig. Gen. John Cataline; Police Chief Frank Pane; Fire Chief Ralph DeBolt; Dominic Serrett, commander of Winnek American Legion Post 396; Nozzolio; and Assemblyman Brian Kolb, R-129 of Canandaigua.

"We will never forget Sept. 11, 2001, as America's darkest day," said Passalacqua. "But out of that day came a national resolve to make the world a safer place."

Gerling also gave a memorial prayer at the Long Pier ceremony, with Cantor Richard Rosenfield of Temple Beth-El delivering the invocation and the Rev. Clarence Williams of Greater Mt. Calvary Church of God in Christ, offering the benediction.

DeBolt and Pane laid a wreath at the base of the flag pole as raindrops briefly fell.

Nick Mazzocchi sang the national anthem and Vern Trochessett played "Taps." Kate McGowan-Ferguson sang "Amazing Grace" and concluded the hour-long program by leading those gathered in "God Bless America."

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